An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Mathematics
Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Limerick City East Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Limerick ETSS Groody Road Towlerton, Castletroy
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	68309N
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	18/09/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	02/12/2024

What is a subject inspection?

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

How to read this report

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Mathematics under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

Included in this subject inspection report is a student-friendly page that provides information for the children/young people in your school about the inspection that occurred recently. It outlines for them some of the main findings and recommendations.

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Child Protection</td><td>Anti-bullying</td></tr>
<tr><td>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</td><td>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013) or Bí Cineálta (2024) and this policy is reviewed annually.
2. The school's current anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and students.</td></tr>
</table>

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Subject inspection

Dates of inspection	17 & 18 September 2024
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students, including focus group meeting	• Observation of teaching and learning during seven lessons • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Established in 2018, Limerick City East Secondary School has a current enrolment of 610 students. It is part of the Educate Together network of schools. The school offers the Junior Cycle, including Level One and Level Two Learning Programmes (L1/L2LPs), an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Established and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programmes as well as the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). It is a rapidly growing school and has employed 31 new teachers in the current school year.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good with some exemplary practices observed.
- A broad range of assessment strategies was used effectively in the majority of lessons observed; students demonstrated good ability to peer and self assess.
- Rapport between teachers and students, and among students when they were working collaboratively, was observed to be very good.
- Subject provision was very good and Mathematics enjoyed high levels of whole school support.
- Individual and collaborative subject planning and preparation was of a very high quality overall.

Recommendations

- The practice of dividing TY mathematics lessons into higher and ordinary levels should be revisited and every effort made to provide purposeful learning experiences in mixed ability settings.
- Planning for co-teaching should focus on expanding the type of tasks set to maximise the learning benefits for students.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- Teaching was effective or highly effective in the majority of lessons observed. Teachers showed diligence and a good awareness of the strengths and interests of the students in their classes. A broad range of teaching approaches was observed during the inspection.
- An outline of what would be done was shared at the beginning of each lesson. In the majority of lessons, the tasks set were progressive and had a clear learning focus.

- Learning experiences were purposeful and positive in almost all lessons. The rapport between teachers and students, and among students, was very good overall. Classroom environments were positive and affirming with an array of material on display to support learning. It was recommended in one lesson that a numberline be made available to students or displayed in class to support the content of the lesson. In another lesson, the students followed the instruction of the teacher but the purpose of the tasks was unclear and there was limited progress made by students.
- Assessment was used effectively to elicit prior knowledge from students and to check on the progress they were making in almost all lessons. In one lesson, students were asked to do a digital task where results were displayed on the board. A small number of students featured prominently on the leaderboard. Once the task was completed, the teacher moved on to the next topic without addressing misconceptions, errors or misunderstandings. There was also scope for better inclusion of alternate or incorrect responses given by students as learning opportunities.
- Exemplary assessment practices were observed in other lessons where students worked collaboratively or independently to check answers. They were supported by the teachers and by material made available to them digitally. Students demonstrated high levels of ability to self and peer assess when given the opportunities and when supported effectively. Any issues or misunderstandings which arose during the lessons were subsequently addressed.
- The focus group with students reported that high levels of individualised support was available from their teachers if they had any difficulties. Teachers were happy to support in person or respond to emails outside of school hours. The students appreciated the willingness of teachers to provide additional help. They also spoke about the range of support materials made available to them online. These included in-class presentations, study notes, online clips and worked examples provided by the teachers. The lunchtime maths club was also mentioned where students could get additional support.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- Subject provision was very good and Mathematics enjoyed high levels of whole school support.
- Timetabling for Mathematics was generous and departmental requests were met by senior management where possible. One such request which was met this year was to have concurrent timetabling for TY to facilitate the modules being taught at higher and ordinary levels while allowing students to move between them. It is recommended that the practice of having higher and ordinary classes in TY be revisited. Every effort should be made to provide purposeful learning experiences for TY students in mixed ability settings.
- Mathematics has a generous allocation to provide co-teaching support in lessons. Management make every effort to provide two mathematics teachers for these lessons which was a considerable commitment.
- Senior management and the board of management provided a very good range of professional learning opportunities for teachers. The school facilitates for both internal and external learning events and the school is very proud of its lunchtime sessions where teachers get to share their methodologies and practices. The mathematics teachers spoke enthusiastically about the benefits of presenting at and learning from others at these sessions.
- The department was well resourced. A very high standard of digital technology was provided across the school campus, and requests for additional equipment and resources to support the teaching and learning of Mathematics are met favourably. The students demonstrated very high levels of competence at using the digital facilities to support their work.
- Many cross-curricluar and extra-curricular opportunities were provided for students to develop their mathematical and numerical skills. The students are involved in a braod

range of competitions and have an active part in preparing and running events for Maths Week.

3. Planning and preparation

- The overall quality of planning and preparation was very good.
- Individual lesson planning ranged from higly effective to requiring improvement to reach a good standard. Where outcomes were best, the lessons had a clear learning focus and students' were facilitated to make progress while being challenged on interesting and purposeful tasks. There was scope for improvement where the teacher interevened too quickly or where students engaged in tasks without clearly understanding the purpose.
- Co-teaching was observed in three lessons. Students benefitted optimally in one of these lessons as they were actively engaged with the tasks set while both teachers circulated and supported. The lesson was planned to maximise the benefits to the students of having a second teacher in the lesson. The additional teachers in the other lessons observed provided some additional support but there was scope for better task-planning to maximise the learning benefits for students. When there are two teachers in lessons, they should plan more comprehensive tasks where students work together and develop their skills to discuss, persevere, compare, deal with unkown, self and peer assess as well as support each other. The teachers were very open to the feedback received to ensure better outcomes for students when two teachers are assigned to lessons.
- The online shared platform housed well-developed schemes of work and units of learning. Detail of the whole-school work to incorporate project based learning experiences for students was included in the digital folder as well as links to different resources and minutes of department meetings. It would be worth considering further discussion around sharing of methodologies in the subject department meetings and including more detail of specific resources to support learning in the schemes of work. Many of the highly effective activities used in lessons were not included in the schemes of work.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

For the students of Limerick City East Secondary School about their learning in Mathematics
Date of inspection:18/09/2024

What kind of inspection did your school have?

A subject inspection was completed in your school. The inspector observed lessons and spoke with the principal and teachers. The inspector met with a group of students to talk to them about their learning in Mathematics.

What were the main findings of the inspection?

- Teaching, learning and assessment practices were very good overall.
- Students' behaviour was exemplary and it was clear that relationships between teachers and students, and among students, were very good.
- The mathematics department was very well supported by management.

What did the inspector recommend to make teaching and learning better in Mathematics?

- The mathematics department should plan for mixed ability mathematics lessons for TY.
- More comprehensive tasks should be planned where students get to work together and discuss methods and results when two teachers are in the class.

Thank you for taking the time to read this page.
Special thanks to the students who participated in the focus group.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Limerick ETSS welcomes the many positive observations made by the inspector during the recent Mathematics inspection. In particular, it is delighted that the overall quality of teaching and learning is very good to exemplary in the classes that were observed. In Limerick ETSS we embed meaningful assessment strategies for learning and the Board is very encouraged by the feedback highlighting that these are being used effectively and that students are demonstrating a good ability to peer and self assess. Building and maintaining a positive school culture is imperative in Limerick ETSS and the Board notes the enormous effort made by staff to establish a positive rapport with students through effective collaboration in the classroom.

Finally, the Board commends the Senior Leadership Team for very good subject provision in Mathematics and the overall support for the subject at whole school level. This is also reflected in the school's emphasis on collaborative subject planning and preparation which is of a very high quality in our school.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The Board of Management will review the practice of dividing TY Mathematics into Higher and Ordinary levels with a view to ensure that purposeful learning experiences are taking place. The option of mixed ability settings will be explored in addition to mixed ability streaming.

In relation to expanding the type of tasks set in classes where there is co-teaching, the school will continue to facilitate CPD for teachers in the area of co-teaching. The Board recognises the efforts being made by the school to engage in CPD in this area and appreciate the ongoing efforts being made by staff to regularly create digital resources and tasks for the purpose of enhancing learning, teaching and assessment in co-teaching classes.

The Inspectorate's Quality Continuum

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Examples of descriptive terms
Excellent	**Provision that is excellent** is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
Very good	**Provision that is very good** is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
Good	**Provision that is good** is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	**Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard** is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	**Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard** is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective